DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 692 PS 020 518

AUTHOR Hom, Harry L., Jr.; And Others
TITLE Developmental Conceptions of Ability and Praise in Sport.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Seattle, WA, April 18-20, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Age Differences; *Athletes; Athletics; *Children; Elementary Secondary Education; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Athletic Ability; *Praise

ABSTRACT

This study investigated children's reasoning about the relationship between praise and ability in an athletic activity. Three groups of young athletes were studied: boys between the ages of 7 and 11, and girls and boys between the ages of 14 and 18. Children read a scenario in which two athletes achieved the same score in an athletic activity. One of the athletes received praise and the other did not. Children were asked to report on the ability of the athletes. Results indicated that older, but not younger, children believed the praised athlete had less ability than the athlete who was not praised. These results were consistent with the results of previous studies on judgments about the relationship between praise and ability in classroom situations. Results also indicated that older male subjects reported that they would prefer to be the nonpraised athlete, while female subjects preferred to be the praised athlete. Seven references are cited. (BC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

DEVELOPMENTAL CONCEPTIONS OF ABILITY AND PRAISE IN SPORT

Harry L. Hom, Jr., Arden Miller,
Michelle Edwards, Mary Beisner

Southwest Missouri State University

SRCD, 1991

ED344692

PS 020518

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Harry L. Hom, Jr.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

This investigation was designed to assess whether children's differential reasoning about ability as related to praise would generalize from the classroom to sports. Children are presented the case of two individuals who have obtained the same score. One child receives praise while the other does not. In the classroom setting, children begin to reason that praise for equal performance implies less ability after about the fifth grade, and express more preference to be like the individual who did not receive praise. Age trends for judgments of ability and valuation regarding performance in a basketball setting were consistent with previous findings for the classroom setting. In comparing males and females, males experienced more difficulty than females in reasoning about ability. Male subjects preferred to be the non-praised athlete, while females valued being the praised athlete.

INTRODUCTION

In this study we considered whether developmental trends in reasoning about praise and ability would generalize from the classroom to an athletic achievement domain. After about the sixth grade, children reason that when performance levels are equal, less effort (Nicholls, 1978) and less praise (Meyer et al., 1979) imply higher ability . Younger children associate effort and praise with higher ability, regardless of performance. Nicholls & Miller (1984) argued that reasoning about praise and effort are related to conception of ability as capacity and later research provided limited empirical support for this view (Barker & Graham, 1987; Miller, Hom, McDowell, & Gionfriddo, 1988).

Given the emphasis on explicit competition in sport, it seemed plausible that children's reasoning about ability as related to praise and effort might differ. An emphasis on competition is believed to enhance ego involvement (Nicholls, 1989), which could foster greater reasoning about ability as capacity. On the other hand, ability and effort may not be as distinguishable in sport since the importance of effort and feedback are stressed.

The primary goal of this research was to compare two male groups of youth athletes (ages 7-11 and 14-18) for their reasoning about ability following varied levels of praise. Also, athletes were asked who they would rather be like. Secondarily, the research was concerned with whether this reasoning was consistent for boys and girls. This latter objective was accomplished by comparing the older males from study 1 to an equivalent grouping of females for study 2.

Method

Youth athletes were recruited from Boy's Club (29 males) and an area high school basketball team (17 males and 17 females). Athletes were provided with a written scenario about two athletes who achieved the same score but received either praise or no praise.

After reading this scenario, athletes were asked (1) which athlete does the coach think has more ability and how can you tell, (2) why this happened, (3) which athlete would you rather be like and why, and (4) which athlete does the coach like more, and why.

Results

In study 1, when comparing males by the use of chi-squared analyses, age trends supported previous findings of developmental changes in reasoning about the meaning of praise for classrooms. For older athletes, praise led to reasoning attributions of lesser ability, $p < .01$. Preferences to be the nonpraised athlete paralleled age-related changes in ability attributions, $p < .0009$ (see Table 1).

For study 2, males experienced more difficulty than females in reasoning about ability linked to praise, $p < .04$. In contrast to males, females valued the praised athlete, $p < .04$.

Table 1

Response to "Which athlete whould you rather be like" as a function of age

Age	Percent Preference		
	Non-praised	Praised	Same
7-11	10.34%	65.52%	24.14%
14-18	58.82%	17.65%	23.53%

These findings indicate that for younger and older male athletes as well as for older female athlete's, reasoning about ability related to praise was compatible with previous classroom research. However, this was not the case for gender differences observed in valuation of ability for the older athletes. These gender differences were consistent with other researchers who found that females in sport are more externally focused and socially oriented (Duda, 1985; Watkins and Montgomery, 1989).

References

Barker, G. P., & Graham, S. (1987). Developmental study of praise and blame as attributional cues. Journal of Educational Psychology, 79, 62-66.

Duda, J. (1985). Goals and achievement orientations of Anglo and Mexican-American adolescents in sport and the classroom. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 9, 131-150.

Meyer, W. U. Bachmann, M., Biermann, U., Hempelmann, M., Ploger, F. O., & Spiller, H. (1979). The informational value of evaluative behavior: Influences of praise and blame on perceptions of ability. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 259-268.

Miller, A. T., Hom, H. L., Jr., McDowell, J. W., & Gionfriddo, S. (1989) Influence of developmental conceptions of ability, praise, blame, and material rewards on judgments of ability and identification. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City.

Nicholls, J. G. (1978). The development of the concepts of effort and ability, perception of academic attainment, and the understanding that difficult tasks require more ability. Child Development, 49, 800-814.

Nicholls, J. G., & Miller, A. T. (1984). Development and its discontents: The differentiation of the concept of ability. In J. G. Nicholls (Ed.). The development of achievement motivation. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Watkins, B., & Montgomery, A. B. (1989). Conceptions of athletic excellence among children and adolescents. Child Development, 60, 1362-1372.